



'Maráia Quéri' and the Queer Future of Contemporary Theater

Djalma Thürler¹

Duda Woyda¹

¹Universidade Federal da Bahia – UFBA, Salvador/BA, Brazil

ABSTRACT – 'Maráia Quéri' and the Queer Future of Contemporary Theater – This text highlights elements of the staging of *Maráia Quéri* – a play written by Raquel S., premiered in 2022 at the D. Maria II National Theatre in Lisbon, performed and directed by the Aveiro actor Romeu Costa. These facts justify its classification as a conference play. Enquiring into its aesthetic and ethical implications for issues regarding gender and sexuality, we highlight the play's interdisciplinary connections – with the politics of subjectivation and queer temporality, for example – and finally conclude that plays like *Maráia Quéri* are important sites of colonial deprogramming.

Keywords: *Maráia Quéri*. **Conference Request. Contemporary Theatre. Queer Temporality. Subjectivation Policies.**

RÉSUMÉ – 'Maráia Quéri' et le Futur Queer de la Scène Contemporaine – L'essai met en évidence les éléments de la mise en scène de *Maráia Quéri* – une pièce dramaturgique de Raquel S., créée en 2022 au Teatro Nacional D. Maria II, à Lisbonne, interprétée et mise en scène par l'acteur d'Aveiro Romeu Costa – qui justifient sa classification comme pièce de conférence. Lorsqu'on se demande quelles sont ses implications esthétiques et éthiques sur les questions liées au genre et à la sexualité, il est souligné que le spectacle établit d'importants liens interdisciplinaires, comme avec les politiques de subjectivation et de temporalité queer. Finalement, la réponse est que des pièces de théâtre comme *Maráia Quéri* sont d'importantes productions de déprogrammation coloniale.

Mots-clés: *Maráia Quéri*. **Pièce de Conférence. Théâtre Contemporain. Temporalité Queer. Politiques de Subjectivation.**

RESUMO – 'Maráia Quéri' e o Futuro Queer da Cena Contemporânea – O ensaio destaca elementos da encenação de *Maráia Quéri* – peça teatral com dramaturgia de Raquel S., estreada em 2022 no Teatro Nacional D. Maria II, em Lisboa, interpretada e dirigida pelo ator aveirense Romeu Costa – que justifiquem sua classificação na qualidade de uma peça-conferência. Ao se perguntar qual sua implicação estética e ética com questões relativas a gênero e sexualidade, ressalta-se que o espetáculo estabelece importantes conexões interdisciplinares, como com as políticas de subjetivação e a temporalidade *queer*. Por fim, responde-se que peças, como *Maráia Quéri*, são importantes produções de desprogramação colonial.

Palavras-chave: *Maráia Quéri*. **Peça-Conferência. Teatro Contemporâneo. Temporalidade Queer. Políticas de Subjetivação.**

A minha vergonha não cabe numa reposta (Raquel S.).¹

Maráia Quéri [Mariah Carey] – thus written, in phonetic Portuguese – is a play penned by Raquel S. (1986), serving as the foundation of the staging that premiered in 2022, at the national theater, Teatro Nacional D. Maria II, in Lisboa (Portugal). It was acted and directed by the Portuguese actor Romeu Costa (1979). The purpose of this text is to carefully examine the strategic use of certain devices and elements of staging that allow us to consider it as a conference-play. We look at how, as a conference play, its implications for gender and sexuality, through the politics of subjectivation and a lens of queer temporality, turn it into a terrain of politicization, for decolonial deprogramming.

For these purposes, we develop a queer methodology for our reading of contemporary theater, freely inspired by Halberstam's (1998, p. 13) notion of *scavenger methodology*. It is a methodology of excavation which recognizes that there is not only one form of praxis, or of orthodoxy, or one way to work intersectionally with research methods; that is, it is not possible to apprehend all the movement of the contemporary world with one theory alone. Hence, different methods are used to collect, analyze, and produce information. This in turn allows for interdisciplinary dialog and interaction that, in the case of our analysis of *Maráia Quéri*, aims, above all, to question normativity.

Queer scholars can advocate, methodologically, the same playful and unstable possibilities that pose a challenge to heteronormative sexual and gender precepts. In our case, we conjoin several strategies of knowledge (as well as watching the play twice, in 2022 and 2023), through a queer ethnographic perspective, an interview with the actor that one of us carried out in Lisbon (2023) and recourse to numerous materials on the play that are available on the internet (critique, newspaper articles, sites, etc.).

We pay careful attention to the way *Maráia Quéri* was staged; within the context of contemporary theater's "conference plays", we examine how this work, in particular, disturbs traditional understandings of gender and sexuality, inviting the public to experience "futures that are more complex than the present moment seems to allow for" (Thürler; Nogueira; Lobo, 2022, p. 230).

Theater, politics of subjectivation and guilty pleasures

When Anzaldúa (1987, p. 87) in *La conciencia de la mestizal Towards New Consciousness*, argues that “nothing happens in the ‘real’ world unless it has happened first, as images in our mind”, she is referring to the power that politics of subjectivation exercise over our imagination. When, for example, normative social narratives on race, gender and sexuality are produced, determining how subaltern persons are represented and perceived in contemporary cultural productions, the way in which such persons are treated and understood in the ‘real’ world is also reinforced. This also means the way in which our world can be commented on, our ways of imagining what can be considered good or bad, what feels ambivalent or terrifying, worthy of being heard out, or what is seen, simply, as abject.

The maxim, “where there is subjectivation, there is no subject”,² (Tassin, 2014, p. 158, our translation) reveals the conceptual novelty of the idea of subjectivation in relation to the classical notion of the subject. In this regard, the concept of politics of subjectivation, in contrast to the notion of the subject- – “*chose, moi ou vassal*” –, designates a process and not a principle, state or result. The process is not one of ‘becoming a subject’, or the production of the subject-in- itself (or what is thought to be a subject, or how to become one.) More than something that happens within the self, or an appropriation of the self, a ‘remembrance’ of the self, identifying a being with what it is supposed to be or with what is required of it in order to be, the politics of subjectivation serve to produce a deviation from the self, a disidentification, a departure from it.

Hence, if on the one hand, the politics of identification allow us to imagine the production of a particular subjectivity, a “notable identity”, established through the normal, natural, acceptable, or true, “which is a lie many times repeated” (Andrade, 2022, p. 512), on the other hand, politics of subjectification, as Tassin (2014) argues, are not a self-determination of the subject. The subject is not at the root of the process, nor is it its motor, or operator.

Because the politics of subjectivation are linked to a form of indefiniteness or wandering – an adventure –, they allow us to visualize an alternative world or future, since beings are exposed despite themselves. Concretely, this means that “whoever happens” with and through the processes

of subjectivation is not the testamentary heir of “what they are” elsewhere. Furthermore, it means that what I am, according to my birth or my socio-historical affiliations, does not decide, in advance, who I discover myself to be, according to this process of subjectivation. This is, at any rate, what we understand when we hear that “subjectivation is political”.

For subalternized people, discovering oneself as *other*, because of the interweaving of the individual and the collective, can mean imagining a future or a space far from oppression or, at least, one in which relations between groups currently empowered and those who are disempowered are changed or improved. It is in this sense, making us question our *guilty pleasures*, that Maráia Quéri calls into question the supposed naturalness of the subject (social, political, racial, sexual), as evidenced within hegemonic assertions.

The politics of subjectivation, as we understand them here, become an experience of disidentification. The term designates a plurality of processes of deterritorialization (Guattari, 1990), of loosening (or losing) one’s moorings, one’s sense of belonging, with a diverse array of ramifications. Yet it provides access to politics, whether this access manifests itself in the form of a collective construction of identity or not, of organized collective action or not.

For Sami Schalk (2019), the association of guilt with pleasure is inevitably related to marginalized or less powerful groups to whom pleasure is often denied. Romeu Costa, in a video made to announce the *Maráia Quéri* season at the Mapaposta Cultural Center, from March 23rd to 26th, 2023, states,

If I occupy the stage and say that I am ashamed of liking Mariah Carey, this is an invitation for people, too, to in some way purge their own shames, which are always associated with pleasure. The fact that a man says he likes a singer, an American singer, does not earn him many brownie points in most of the circles we move in. And I think my shame about liking Mariah Carey was a hefty enough beginning to create empathy with the audience (Costa, 2023, no page numbers [n. p.]).

Sami Schalk, professor of gender and women’s studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, in her text *Lowbrow Culture and Guilty Pleasures? The Performance and Harm of Academic Elitism*, responds to a *Twitter* message written by reporter Jack Grove, which had the following content,

“Hi academic Twitter. I’m looking for some scholars who would write for THE about their guilty cultural pleasures/unashamed love for supposedly ‘lowbrow’ subjects/activities. Dubious TV & literature choices are most welcome. DM me if you have some creative ideas” (Schalk, 2019, n. p.).

It is important to signal that the term *lowbrow*, also brought up by Romeu Costa in *Maráia Quéri*, in Portuguese, can be understood as something that is uncomplicated or that requires little intelligence to be understood, something unintellectual or uncultured, of dubious quality and which, related to things considered suspect or untrustworthy, ends up establishing a division between high/low culture, reinforcing the elitist boundaries between the one and the other. For Schalk (2019, n. p.), this perception can be gleaned from the responses to Grove’s original tweet,

But instead, the framing seemed to reinforce this elitist boundary. The dynamic I’m highlighting played out in the replies to Grove’s original tweet. One person asked if playing in a band, going to football games, and watching geeky television counted. Grove said it did not. That’s “more just general leisure activity outside of work,” he explained. Another person asked if tarot-card reading and astrology counted. Yes, Grove said. This dismissive and random categorizing is something that would infuriate my many queer witch friends and healers of color who have worked to resist the devaluing of these very subjects and have used astrology and tarot-card reading as antiracist, queer-friendly, feminist practices.

As suggested in his tweets, much of what is considered lowbrow, objects supposedly less cultured and of lesser quality, are, according to Schalk, associated with poor and working-class people, women, and racialized peoples, such as science fiction, the genre in which Octavia Butler (1947-2006) was a pioneer. With *sci-fi*, Butler moved to the front of Afrofuturism, a phenomenon that celebrates exploring different futures for the African diaspora.

In an article Schalk wrote for *Inside Higher Education*, in which she expounds on in her commentary on *Twitter*, she states that the term “guilty pleasure” is linked to opposing the notion that intelligent or serious people should only enjoy things that are part of elitist culture. She argues that it is frequently the people with most power – traditionally, rich white men – who determine what is worth enjoying, as opposed to what constitutes guilty pleasure.

Schalk, who declares herself a queer woman of color, lover of pop culture and scholar of contemporary literature, including children's lit, thus comes to the conclusion that these "guilty pleasures" are based on classism, racism and sexism,

I responded to say that a lot of these things that people were saying were their guilty pleasures are actually things that have a lot of importance for people, have a lot of real depth to them when you take time to learn about them, and are often things that are associated with women and people of color, marginalized folks. (Schalk, 2019, n. p.).

In this sense, *Maráia Quéri*, aware that social life is intersected by multiple relations of domination, subordination, and subjugation, seeks to improve human life, and reduce our negative impact on one another – and on society – by encouraging the audience to question the why. In other words, what is the problem with liking Mariah Carey? And what is the problem with continuing to like her when you are over forty? Does pleasure, when it lies at a distance from the heteronormative framework, such as marriage and reproduction, offend anyone? Is one way to experience living joyfully "wrong" because it is different from the experience of living joyfully in a world that is guided by heteronormative conventions?

Responding to these musings, *Maráia Quéri*, a play written at the intersection of fiction and autobiography, blurs traditional markers of adulthood, signaling that queer lives follow their own temporal logic (Halberstam, 2022), that they do not follow a progression in the same way that non-queer lives do.

Queer time is constituted by a fundamental ambivalence

For Mariela Solana, there is no consensus on the notion of queer temporality and, like any expression related to queerness, its meaning is not clearly defined. The subjects of "queer temporality", in the literature that Solana analyzes, may be individuals who simply do not fit the socially legitimated narratives and conventions - such as gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender - but especially those who actively oppose them. In general terms, it has been used

[...] to refer to a whole series of narratives, metaphors and figures on practices, experiences and sensations of gender and sexuality that conflict with socially legitimate temporal norms. The notion of queer temporality enables

us to connect three ideas – time, gender-sexuality and norms – that are not necessarily thought of together³ (Solana, 2017, p. 39, our translation).

Hence, she speaks of the queer time – which in no way refers to a “metaphysics of time – an objective, quantitative or natural time of the universe” - (Solana, 2017, p. 43) of an ambiguous life, in opposition to the five “*objective life events*” still frequently used by hegemonic discourse to measure entry into adulthood– “[...] finish one’s studies, join the labor market, become financially independent, marry and become a parent ” (Aronson, n. p. in: Jaffe, 2018, n. p.)⁴.

It is this ambivalence regarding linear temporality, this “skeletal displacement” (Freeman, 2010, n. p. apud Solana, 2017, p. 44), this “[...] specific organization of temporality that tells us how we should feel, desire, imagine and see ourselves as subjects of a gender and a sexual orientation” (Kveller, 2021, p. 14), which make Maráia Quéri a terrain of politicization, theater used as a politics of subjectivation for the critical reconstruction of the imaginary of the “hetero-planet” (Despentes; Preciado, 2021, p. 10), a space of affective-moral response, of creative and intelligent recovery of the power of certain presumably negative emotions, which not only challenge the heteronormative affective and discursive grammars, but all their devices of neoliberal governmentality.

Romeu Costa, “imprisoned in a game of shame” (Hocquenghem, n. p. apud Bréville, 1971), renders the play an example of how hetero-linear temporality acts on queer subjects, as if they were anachronistic, unsynchronized “[...]with the ordinary linear measurements of the everyday” (Dinshaw, 2002, p. 4 apud Solana, 2017, p. 44). By claiming the singer Mariah Carey as the epitome of his guilty pleasures, Costa talks about all our shames and, thus, arrives at a more complex level of discussion: how we manage to socially survive the cruel schemes that, in some way, we are forced to comply with. Hence, anachronistically, at 42 years of age, when he builds up the courage to confess his homosexuality, he embraces the harbinger of a queer future, already alive in contemporary theater.

Thus, through the confession of his shame (first the fact that he likes the American singer, then the fact that he is homosexual), the actor-social researcher, in a kind of TED Talks, assumes a professorial tone and, alone on stage, in front of imaginary students, uses the majestic plural to adorn his lecture in truth, trying to understand it, and to understand himself. At

that moment, his didacticism is transformed and the “social researcher” gives way to the actor Romeu Costa, who shares his own story, his tastes, his emotions, sketching, in the process, a portrait of Portugal and the country’s relationship with the world and with itself, in an attempt to “manage to survive” (Costa, 2022, 38:36min)

Maráia Quéri, as a conference-play, invites its spectators to see how, frequently, it is the *hetero-cis christian capitalocene* (Krenak, 2022, p. 36) that establishes what is bad and what is good, based on racist, sexist and classist norms, in which

[...] by instrumentalizing the idea of guilt, the Church dilutes the barriers between intimate experience and social behavior, public behavior. Let us think about omnipresence: God sees everything. And our choices are made as good or bad and enable us to go to heaven or be sent to hell. There are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, good and bad, right and wrong. [...] With this logic, other forms of life different from those of the West, different from those of the Northern Hemisphere, are excluded and, when we define norms of social harmony, circles of belonging to a club, a group, a society, we draw, at the same time, margins, spaces of exclusion, spaces of dissonance and we identify experiences that should be categorized as wrong (S., 2022, n. p.). (S., 2022, n. p.).

Upon realizing that the “Judeo-Christian horizon”, through the device of guilt as a mechanism for organizing society, intersects our experiences and filters our tastes, Romeu Costa urges us to increasingly question ourselves, to create dissonances instead of leaving norms unquestioned. At a certain point in the play, the speaker philosophizes,

It is important to create an openness to dissonance. We tend to think of this dissonance as failure, as lack, and we associate it to the value of guilt and shame that we attribute to certain films and certain songs. Guilt, like shame, implies an external evaluation of our behavior. Guilt puts the problem in the act: (she writes on the floor of the stage) ‘I did a horrible thing!’ Guilt emphasizes the subject (she again writes on the stage floor) ‘I am a horrible person!’ I’m a horrible person because I did this. When we come to our senses – ‘When we come to our senses’ is a problematic expression in itself, it is as if we leave the self to do something stupid, or as if the self were a defined, civic and restricted entity from which we leave when we do not live up to expectations – , when we return to what we identify as ourselves [...] – after listening to ‘Hero’, by Mariah Carey and singing in the mirror, perhaps with a brush in our hand and, certainly, imagining a concert [...], in that realm of fantasies, we sing on the stage of our own imagination, but when we come to our sens-

es, we feel ashamed, as if even at home, in our own room, in our own car, there was a public gaze, as if singing ‘Hero’ revealed some terrible truths about ourselves. In ‘guilty pleasures’, private and public intersect in the arena of guilty imaginations. It is a battle between what gives us pleasure and what we believe is lacking in quality (S., 2020, n. p.).

Inducing us to reflect upon what, according to a binary epistemology (Preciado, 2022), are the operative relations of pleasure-shame, public-private, and male-female, *Maráia Quéri* gives voice and action to a conflict on the social roles that govern society and points, once again, to the critical effects that the politics of subjectivation may impose on us.

We understand the politics of subjectivation as something that unfolds in a sphere of social existence, based on a multiplicity of power relations, within a specific domain of practices (including cultural practices) that encompass processes of self-invention, and art, by “incorporating a new critique of essentialism” (Solana, 2017, p. 49). Art then takes on the important role of pushing beyond the constraints of remembrance and performativity that society imposes. By expanding everything that ties it to the normative social world and nomothetic temporality, by valuing certain cultural objects, art differentiates people as singular humans. Hence,

[...] as it is now well-known, from the early days of queer studies, gender/sexual essentialism emerged as a conceptual and political enemy. In the face of fixed, immutable and ahistoric representations of sexuality, queer authors have proposed an alternative ontological notion that foregrounds their shifting, contingent, incoherent, and situated character. These new theoretical incursions critique, above all, temporal essentialism (Solana, 2017, p. 49).

The aim, therefore, of our politics of subjectivation has been not only to inject dialectics into the explanation of social phenomena, of the social and the individual, the public and the private, but to redefine a certain interpretation of social structural-functionalism. This, in other words, is how *Maráia Quéri*, as a terrain for politicization, by relating the logics of the production of subjectivities to the logics of the social world in which it operates, contributes to the production of a new political subject – one who, by announcing that pleasure is political, “[...] problematizes the sociocultural processes that generate the heteronormative bodies which limit our understanding of the provisional, instable character of sex and gender categories” (Thürler, 2022, p. 250). To paraphrase Schalk (2019) herself, pleasure should not make us feel guilty.



Image 1 – Publicity shot. Sourced: Felipe Ferreira⁵.

A conference-play

In an interview he gave to Leandro Tavares for the Podcast *I don't know her - Cultura e Tendências*, Romeu Costa (2022) states that he could have done a conventional play, for mere entertainment,

with a story, a scenario, a fictional family and casting a teenager who would be a kind of alter ego of mine, always going around the house listening to Mariah Carey; and the whole family, somewhat representative of society itself, would always be harping, 'Stop listening to Mariah Carey! You won't be become a good professional if all you do is listen to Mariah Carey! She has nothing good to offer you ' I could have taken this from a fictional angle, but I thought that a researcher trying to examine Mariah Carey theoretically, analytically, scientifically, pragmatically, would be strange indeed, and very interesting at the same time. (Costa, 2022, 37:11 min).

By choosing a conference-play, Romeu Costa is aware that his task on stage is to thin out the character, dilute its contours, question the fable it promotes. Taking distance from the role he is playing, he becomes actor-epistemologist (Thürler; Woyda; Moreno, 2020, p. 6) and, as such, conducts “a staged reflection”, “a way of performing the text, juxtaposing concept and action” (Rocha, 2014, n. p. apud Lordelo, 2020, p. 306), always in constant negotiation with the audience.

The conference-play (Thürler; Woyda; Moreno, 2020; Sanches, 2020; Lordelo, 2020) is a subgenre of performance, a sort of expanded artistic practice that goes beyond the format of an academic lecture and feeds a “blurring of the boundaries between arts and sciences” (Lordelo, 2020, p. 304), that is, conference plays incorporate “[...] elements of both academic lecture and artistic performance function simultaneously as meta-readers and as meta-performance and, as such, challenge established ideas about the production of knowledge and meaning in each of the forms they take reference from” (Thürler; Woyda; Moreno, 2020, p. 5). In this type of staging, “[...] the characters, actors and/or performers speak directly to/with the audience, using various discursive strategies that mix similar genres such as lecture, chat, testimony, confession, experiential account, among others” (Sanches, 2020, p. 302).

The conference-play, “[...]by abandoning bourgeois theatrical illusionism, proposes in a conversational tone a kind of staged thought with a clear positioning on the left” (Thürler; Woyda; Moreno, 2020, p. 15), clears a pathway for the protagonism of movements of thought.



Image 2 – Publicity Shot. Source: Felipe Ferreira⁶.

The costume design of the conference piece is, almost always, limited to the speaker’s own clothing, hence in line with what Thürler, Woyda and Moreno (2020, p. 10) have referred to as “de-spectacularization”. In *Eu subloco meu próprio desejo* [I sublet my own desire], for example, Lordelo (2020, p. 308) renders the following description, “On stage, under white light, wearing a striped shirt, jeans, and sneakers, Osório begins his ‘lecture’

by introducing himself, in the middle of two chairs; a notebook, a printer and a cell phone are always visible.”

Romeu Costa introduces himself in a similar manner: in a conference room, there is a projection screen, a projector that rests on the floor, where everyone can see it, and a table with several objects that are used during the lecture, such as a cassette player and a keyboard (as depicted in the photo above).

The play is replete with signs that evoke a lecture, including linguistic ones. One thousand seven hundred people, the speaker announces, are taking part in a survey about the freedom with which we allow ourselves to take pleasure in things,

[...] and in the graphs we are going to see, we present some of these results. Of the people who responded to our survey, 40% identify as women, 30% as men, 30% as other; 5% do not define their sexual orientation, 10% are homosexual, 20% heterosexual and 65% bisexual. People’s professions vary a lot - teachers, hairdressers, nurses, retirees, engineers, actors, drag queens, cleaners, researchers - and, in addition to collecting demographic data, that is, regarding the composition of the population that responded to our survey, we also ask people about the songs they listened to in their teen years (S., 2022, n. p.).

In *Maráia Quéri*, Romeu Costa is a social scientist who is doing research on the North American singer Mariah Carey, whose music is classified “as dance ‘pop’ – it is always hard to define what ‘pop’ is. The term refers to a more commercial, more accessible music, usually targeting a youthful audience” (S., 2022, n. p.), as he explains at some point in his conference play.

The lecture takes off from a study of music,

But why music? Why [choose] music as an object of study? Music accompanies us in intimate moments. When we are alone or in shared moments. At home, in the car, on the street with headphones. But we also hear music at big celebrations, at parties, at school. Music is the soundtrack of memories, of moments. Music can be a way of choosing who is part of our group, of creating bonds, of choosing our tribe at school, for example. From being part of a choir, football cheerleading, playlists, sometimes shared with people all over the world. We form an ephemeral group when we listen to a concert together in the audience. And music allows the installation of these circles of belonging and exclusion through, for example, pushing some

songs into the realm of guilty pleasures, into the realm of pleasure that makes us feel guilty. (S., 2022, n. p.).

One of the characteristics of *guilty pleasures* is that they are almost always of the type we can refer to as popular or ordinary, says the lecturer:

For a nameless sea of people there is no problem in liking the North American singer, but in other contexts, she belongs to ‘guilty pleasure’. There is something pleasurable in listening to her, but [her work] is not empowered enough, whether due to its simple lyrics and music, the constant display of her vocal virtuosity, her wide acceptance and commercial success; for whatever it may be, Mariah Carey’s work tends to be classified as mass culture, as we have said, as low brow culture. And this may place it in the realm of guilty pleasures (S., 2022, n. p.)

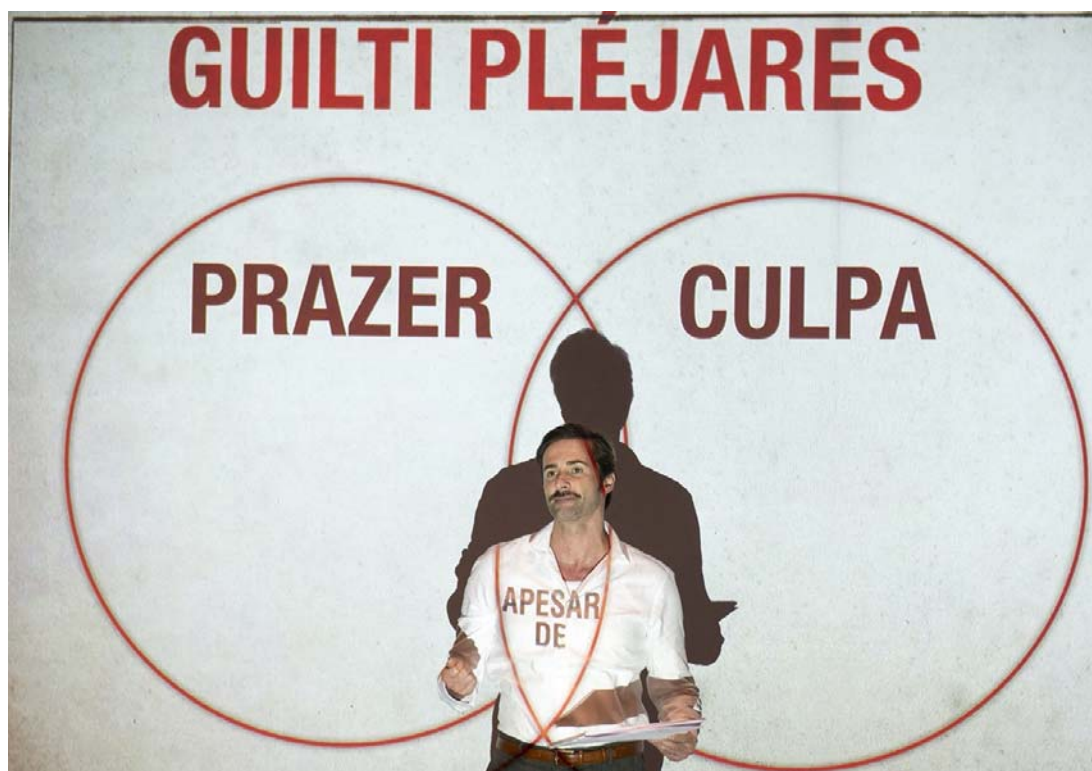


Image 3 – Publicity shot. Source: Felipe Ferreira⁷.

At this point, the lecturer states that his topic is not music in general, but specifically, the songs we listen to in private, and that most likely, we would not have the courage to listen to in public, because they make us feel shame or embarrassment:

The questions projected here are part of this study. We put together a questionnaire that we have sent out, mainly through social networks and the internet, which seek to give us some answers regarding our relationship with

music, in general, and with the songs that we feel ashamed to listen to in public, in the English language, the association between pleasure and guilt that we call *guilti pléjares* (sic) - but we will talk about that in a moment (S., 2022, n. p.).

From this unusual reference, ideas about the fear of disgrace or ridicule are discussed, about our guilty pleasures as a hetero-erotic device capable of distancing us from pleasure to, in general, investigate the modes and mechanisms of things, to learn how they work and then dismantle them, in the end, learning about how the world of people and their behavior works. “Why do we do what we do?” the speaking actor asks at the beginning of his speech. All this is fundamental for creating counter-discourses.

Maráia Quéri, by recognizing that there is a “[...] biopolitical stranglehold that requires openings, however tiny, to reactivate our political, theoretical, affective, bodily, existential imagination” (Pelbart, 2013, p. 13), produces a counter-discourse that encourages individuals to supplement their being. Spectators are prepared for a potential ethical and political transformation. Thus, in its aesthetics, the play starts from the micropolitical individual, the, the personal, yet only as a metonymic resource for true confrontation with colonial practices, the norms and rules imposed “on our pre-Atlantic trajectories / existences / symbology” (Nascimento, 2019, p. 10) established through the canon and its ability to exclude deviant or divergent memories and experiences. The stories of women, migrants, racialized and LGBTQ+ people, as examples, have often been absent from national canons.

Romeu Costa leaves this discussion for the end of the play, when he concludes that

[...] the canon establishes which authors are considered great and which are minor, and this definition depends on the idea of high and low culture, that is, the valorization of some cultures over others, of belonging and exclusion and, always linked to the Academy, the canon is a way of valuing certain studies, certain means, certain techniques, certain discourses to the detriment of others. It relies on sophistication or erudition, as if the Academy were a sieve that separates the precious wheat that only the elite can savour, radically distinguished from the chaff, which sediments mass culture: high culture/low culture, high culture/mass culture, high brow/ low brow are concepts that affect the way we relate to our musical, literary and cinematographic choices. And these concepts have endured over the centuries because

they are still symptoms of a cultural heritage that is Western, Eurocentric, upper class, white, sexist, nationalist. The canon excludes, for example, women writers. Literature written by women, by racialized people, by queer people, gender dissidents, was excluded, as a niche, a minor field that falls outside the history of great literature. *Guilty pleasures* moves beyond mere object to signify something which these groups safeguard: being a woman signifies guilty pleasures, being queer signifies guilty pleasures, being black signifies guilty pleasures (S., 2022, n. p.).



Image 4 – Publicity shot. Source: Felipe Ferreira⁸.

By concluding that some experiences are *guilty pleasures*, inscribed in power relations that both produce and bear the canonic narratives of the state, *Maráia Quéri* alerts us to the “official” silences, the “archival violence”, the erasure of the history of people who live on the margins of society” (Felitti, 2022, p. 9) – the bodies

[...] considered as pure anatomy, edible flesh, working muscles, reproductive uterus, skin to ejaculate inside. This was and continues to be the case for those who are called 'animals', colonized, enslaved and racialized bodies, but also, in another way, women, those who are considered sick or disabled, children, homosexuals and those whose souls, according to 19th century medicine, intended to get out of the body they were in and journey to another one, then considered to belong to the other sex (Preciado, 2022, n. p.).

In other words, if archiving involves the organization, classification, evaluation and interpretation of files, women’s lives, the transnational experiences of migrants, racialized and LGBT+ bodies were considered too mi-

nor, private, domestic, or marginal experiences and therefore irrelevant to a national canon defined by state formation and nation building.

Without citing Foucault, the social scientist played by Romeu Costa says that his focus is to think about the technologies of power in modernity, its system of normalization and its forms of coercion, which function as social discipline, as they manufacture, observe, create knowledge, institutions, individuals etc. that allow us to invade, surround, manage, prolong, and “improve” life. Disciplinary society asserts itself, then, as a way of exercising normalizing power that ends up naturalizing certain forms of organizing times and rhythms (Solana, 2017).

Toward a new consciousness

In *Arte como potência de si, a peça-conferência e o ator-epistemólogo* [Art as a power of self, the conference play and the actor-epistemologist] Thürler, Woyda e Moreno, musing on the aesthetic categories of the conference-play, alert us to the emergence of the actor-epistemologist. According to the authors,

[...] there is something different about these actors and actresses when they value discourse, experiment with their thoughts and experience the thoughts of others, all to the detriment of spectacular forms of staging. Intellectual actors who, by attributing a proto-fascist project to anti-intellectualism, experiment and elaborate their thoughts in front of the audience, making their student-spectator, in a Socratic way, arrive at something new on their own, no matter what (Thürler; Woyda; Moreno, 2020, p. 26).

It is as actor-epistemologist that Romeu Costa elaborates, before his audience, collective knowledge that is also sharp social reflection.

Attentive and critical on issues of the traumatic colonial past, Maráia Quéri reviews canonical concepts of right/wrong, learned /popular and becomes, itself, the antithesis of the canon. Given its strong interdisciplinary character and its engagement with debates, values, and visions of the contemporary world, it can be recognized as an important ground of politicization, an instrumental component of disengagement with and deprogramming from the colonial syndrome.

Hybrid of Art and Science, it lies porously between the theoretical and the political, mostly (Hadock-Lobo, 2011) situated between objectivity and subjectivity. It is, of course, anti-Durkheimian: in its desire to obtain

an impersonal and therefore, objective view of social reality, it does not strain to avoid or eliminate subjective traps. *Maráia Quéri* stands out, in this sense, as a play devoted to recovering identities and affective economies that the hetero-erotic system threatens to obliterate.

Notes

- ¹ My shame overflows any attempt to respond.
- ² *là où il y a subjectivation, il n'y a pas de sujet.*
- ³ To refer to an entire set of accounts, metaphors, and figures of speech on gendered and sexualized practices, experiences and sensations that conflict with socially legitimated temporal norms. The notion of queer temporality enables the connection of three ideas – time, gender/sexuality and norms – which are not necessarily thought of in their intersection.
- ⁴ Kveller (2021, p. 14), citing Freeman (2010), refers to this process as “chrononormativity”.
- ⁵ Available at: <https://www.tndm.pt/pt/calendario/maraia-queri/>. Accessed on October 9th, 2022.
- ⁶ Available at: <https://www.tndm.pt/pt/calendario/maraia-queri/>. Accessed on October 9th, 2022.
- ⁷ Available at: <https://www.tndm.pt/pt/calendario/maraia-queri/>. Accessed on October 9th, 2022.
- ⁸ Available at: <https://www.tndm.pt/pt/calendario/maraia-queri/>. Accessed on October 9th, 2022.

References

- ANDRADE, Oswald de. A Antropofagia como visão do mundo (1930). In: ANDRADE, Oswald de. **Diário Confessional**. Organização de Manuel da Costa Pinto. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2022. p. 511-552.
- ANZALDÚA, Gloria. La conciencia de la mestiza: towards a new consciousness. In: ANZALDÚA, Gloria. **Borderlands: the new mestiza = La frontera**. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987. p. 77-101.
- BRÉVILLE, Benoît. “**Relatório contra a normalidade**”, **Frente Homossexual de Ação Revolucionária**, 1971. Available at: <https://we.riseup.net/assets/262475/ofereçoaabunda.pdf>. Accessed on April 5th, 2023.

COSTA, Romeu. **Entrevista**. I don't know her - Cultura e Tendências. Interviewed by Leandro Tavares, March, 2022.

COSTA, Romeu. **Divulgação**. YouTube: Centro Cultural da Malaposta. 2023. Disponível em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9Yooow5nu8c&t=94s>. Accessed on April 5th, 2023.

DESPENTES, Virgínia; PRECIADO, Paul B. Prólogo. In: ZIGA, I. **Devir Cachorra**. São Paulo: Crocodilo; n-1, 2021. p. 9-12.

FELITTI, Chico. **Rainhas da noite**: As travestis que tinham São Paulo a seus pés. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2022.

GUATTARI, Félix. **As três ecologias**. Translation: Maria Cristina F. Bittencourt. Revision: Suely Rolnik. Campinas: Papyrus, 1990.

HADOCK-LOBO, Rafael. **Para um pensamento úmido**: a filosofia a partir de Jacques Derrida. Rio de Janeiro: Nau: PUC-Rio, 2011.

HALBERSTAM, Jack. **Female masculinity**. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.

HALBERSTAM, Jack. Temporalidade *queer* e geografia pós-moderna. **Periódicus**, n. 8, v. 1, p. 282-305, Oct/Nov. 2022.

JAFFE, Sara. Queer Time: The Alternative to “Adulthood”. **JSTOR Daily**, January 10th, 2018. Available at <https://daily.jstor.org/queer-time-the-alternative-to-adulthood/>. Accessed on April 4th, 2023.

KRENAK, Ailton. **Futuro ancestral**. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2022.

KVELLER, Daniel Boianovsky. **Dissidências sexuais, Temporalidades queer**: Uma crítica ao imperativo do progresso e do orgulho. 2021. Doctoral Thesis in Psychology, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre 2021.

LORDELO, Lia da Rocha. Códigos e fronteiras na palestra-performance: por uma poética do conhecimento. **Repertório**, Salvador, Year 23, n. 35, p. 302-319, 2020.

NASCIMENTO, Tatiana. **Cuirlobismo Literário**. Série Pandemia. São Paulo: n-1 Edições, 2019.

PELBART, Peter Paul. **O avesso do niilismo** - Cartografias do esgotamento. São Paulo: n-1 edições, 2013.

PRECIADO, Paul B. **Dysphoria mundi** (Narrativas hispánicas) (Spanish Edition). Spain: Editorial Anagrama, 2022. Edição do Kindle.

S., Raquel. **Maráia Quéri**. Dramaturgy, 2022.

SANCHES, João Alberto Lima. A Conferência como estratégia dramática de desvio. **Revista Cena**, Porto Alegre, n. 31, p. 300-311, September – December, 2020.

SCHALK, Sami. Lowbrow Culture and Guilty Pleasures? The Performance and Harm of Academic Elitism. **Inside Higher Education**. 2019. Available at <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2019/02/22/professor-asks-who-arbiters-lowbrow-scholarly-interests-and-pursuits>. Accessed on April 5th, 2023.

SOLANA, Mariela. Asincronía y crononormatividad. Apuntes sobre la idea de temporalidad queer. **El banquete de los Dioses**, v. 5, n. 7, p. 37-65, 2017.

TASSIN, Étienne. Subjectivation versus sujet politique. Réflexions à partir d'Arendt et de Rancière. **Tumultes**, v. 2, n. 43, p. 157-173, 2014.

THÜRLER, Djalma. A coreografia da descolonialidade e a qualidade performática da escrita *queer*. In: MOURA, Iago et al. (Org.). **Cutucando o cu do cânone: in-submissões teóricas e desobediências acadêmicas**. Salvador: Devires, 2022. p. 247-261.

THÜRLER, Djalma; NOGUEIRA, Marcelo; LOBO, Marcus. The Prom: o *queer* também pode ser *zazz* ou o amor enquanto tecnologia para a revolução. **Aceno – Revista de Antropologia do Centro-Oeste**, v. 9, n. 21, p. 227-240, September – December, 2022.

THÜRLER, Djalma; WOYDA, Duda; MORENO, Mariana. Arte como potência de si, a peça-conferência e o ator-epistemólogo. **Urdimento**, Florianópolis, v. 2, n. 38, p. 1-31, August -September 2020.

Djalma Thürler is a member of the Research Group on Art and Politics of the CLACSO, with a specialization in Cultural Administration and Policies from the University of Girona, Spain. He is Associate Professor, IHAC/UFBA and a member of the permanent faculty of the graduate program in Culture, Society and Theater Artes at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA). He is artistic director of the ATeliê voadOR Teatro and a NuCuS (Group for Research and Extension on Culture and Sexuality/Núcleo de Pesquisa e Extensão em Cultura e Sexualidade) researcher.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9161-0300>

E-mail: djalmathurler@ufba.br



Duda Woyda holds Master's and Doctoral degrees in Culture and Society from the Federal University of Bahia (Universidade Federal da Bahia -UFBA). His research focuses on the new political connections that have emerged within the theater arts. Actor, producer and dancer, he received his training in dance at the Bahia State Cultural Foundation Dance School (Escola de Dança da Fundação Cultural do Estado da Bahia) and is actor -researcher in two research groups, the ATeliê voadOR Teatro and the NuCuS (Group for Research and Extension on Culture and Sexuality/Núcleo de Pesquisa e Extensão em Cultura e Sexualidade).
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0561-2666>
E-mail: dudawoyda@gmail.com

Availability of research data: the dataset supporting the results of this study is published in this article.

This original paper, translated by Miriam Adelman, is also published in Portuguese in this issue of the journal.

Received on April 15th, 2023

Accepted on September 5th, 2023

Editor in charge: Gilberto Icle

